

SKETCHES  
OF THE  
MEDICAL PROFESSION IN IRELAND.

*Reduction of the Present Term of Medical Graduation in the University of Dublin considered.*

“THE progressive increase of the medical graduates at Edinburgh during the last fifty years, appears from the following table of the numbers who received the degree of M. D. during each successive period of five years, ending

Years	Graduates.
1781 .....	128
1786 .....	131
1791 .....	151
1796 .....	175
1801 .....	233
1806 .....	242
1811 .....	258
1816 .....	366
1821 .....	534
1826 .....	574
Total .....	2792

Of these 319 were Scottish, 706 English, 843 Irish, 225 from the British colonies, and 193 foreigners of all descriptions. A. Duncan, jun., Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, 1827.”

The article from which the preceding statement has been selected, teems with important intelligence to that part of the profession who take an interest in their own respectability, and the education of their future members. It may with confidence be considered a proclamation, embodying the opinions and intentions of the University of Edinburgh, on the much agitated questions of exacting higher qualifications in literature, philosophy, and professional science, from graduates in medicine and surgery. Lest the public might mistake it for the mere production of an individual, or the routine criticism of an editor, it is significantly endorsed with the signature of a gentleman uniting the several functions of librarian, registrar, and professor in his person, in that institution. In this official ultimatum, as it may be well called, it is asserted in very direct and dictatorial terms, that the Scotch school is determined to pursue that course through which it has arrived at its present boasted prosperity, and to oppose, by every means in its power, all the advances of suggested innovation. Throughout the long and elaborate reasoning by which this resolution is attempted to be justified, much disparagement of every other British college is mingled; and from the general tenor of the discourse, it might be inferred, that *Æsculapius* and his daughter *Hygeia* had really descended from the skies, and fixed their terrestrial residence in the capital of Scotland. With the arguments by which the writer endeavours to prove that a liberal education is unnecessary for students in medicine, I shall have nothing to do—that portion only of the document relating to Ireland shall claim my attention. The absurdity of his positions on the former topic, even if they had not been overturned a thousand times, might protect them from the respect of a refutation; but his taunts and misrepresentations of the state of medical affairs in Ireland, besides being as yet unnoticed by any other writer, furnish me with an appropriate opportunity of submitting a long-cherished proposition to the profession of that country. I have never indeed read an essay which so compendiously supplies all the requisites for enforcing the necessity of the objects contemplated in these papers—the correction of abuses in the professional establishments of Dublin, and the elevation of that city into a national school of medicine. To secure the latter object, the execution of the former duty seemed an indispensable step in the process; for, men must see their faults before

they correct them. However, many may differ as to the manner, in which, that task was performed, none, at least, who read the arithmetical sarcasm on Irish institutions, quoted at the head of this paper, can deny the urgent provocation to severity of censure. On the present occasion, however, I should willingly exchange remonstrance for persuasion—steep my pen in the very “milk of human kindness,” instead of dipping it in the “tincture of galls,” if only one symptom of recovery from their apathy were discoverable in the patrons of these establishments. But it is not surely in the remarkable circumstance of such an insult as has been quoted, being three months in type without an answer from any Dublin practitioner, that we are to look for such a sight of returning regeneration. The instructed representative of a rival university sneers at the school of Dublin—talks of Irishmen being dependent on his college for degrees—totals up Irish students in his balance-sheet as if they formed part of his stock in trade—and vauntingly announces that they exceeded the number of Scotchmen who graduated at Edinburgh during the last fifty years, by a majority of twenty-seven! Eight hundred and forty-seven Scotch doctors imported into the country in half a century, and such an establishment as Trinity College in existence! If patriotism were other than a name, and public spirit not extinct in the Irish heart, it might be expected that such an announcement as this would inflame the cheeks of the profession of the country into one universal blush of shame, and amite their very hearts with penitent indignation. Though my hopes are faint that it will stir one muscle of their marble physiognomies; nay, though I am conscious it will be perused with cold-blooded indifference by some of the hereditary colonists of Ireland, who seem alike to delight in the degradation of the science and the liberties of their country; yet I have been induced to expose this merited taunt on their inactivity, with the expectation, that if it should not awaken a national impulse in their breast, it might stimulate them to exertion through the less honourable motives of avarice and self-interest.

Nemo adeo ferus est, qui non mitescere possit,

Si modo pecunie patientem accommodet aurem :

is an interpolation of the part which they will understand, and like the generals in the decline of the Greek and Roman empires, when glory had been sated and valour collapsed, I would point to the gold in the enemy's camp, and tell the medical veterans of Dublin who recline on their arms, there is your recompense, if you have

only the courage to make it your own. But perhaps I erred in thus preceding my argument by passion, and defeat my own views by exciting the hostility of those whom I should rather conciliate. Be it so; though the Irishman whose feelings would wait to be roused by discussion on this subject, is not likely to be acted upon by any process of persuasion, nor deserves such a tribute of respect to his judgment. Enough, however, it is to be hoped, of nationality remains undiminished in the country to sympathise with the sentiments expressed, and to merit the deference of an exposition of the subject; it is for such men that the following refutation of the statement alluded to is intended, and the proposal naturally rising out of it, depending.

The writer of these reflections on the School of Dublin, having condensed his misrepresentation into the manageable space of a paragraph, its dissection will occupy but little time. He commences his fulsome panegyric on the Scottish University and implied censure on the Dublin College, in the following scrap of his domestic manufacture, political economy. “There is no surer criterion of the value of any commodity than the demand for it, taken in connexion with its price.” The application of the science of the counter to the affairs of a liberal profession, is at least characteristic of the Scotchman, and worthy of that cause which is attempted to be upheld by this profound apothegm of the shambles and the fish-market. The philosophy of profit, it would seem, has been so much the study of his life, that it is not at all surprising his first illustration should be drawn from his favourite study, and that his love of the “siller,” should not only blind him to an error in his own standard, but to the absurdity of applying such a scale to matters, which bear no analogy to the concerns of the shop. For it so happens, that neither the demand, the price, nor both taken together, denote the value of any article, since there are many things which bring the highest prices of no value at all, while others of the greatest utility and demand, may be had free of cost. Of the latter, the water with which the learned furrier removes the dust from his fingers, is a familiar instance; of the former, the port, with which it may be presumed he smothers the after-dinner aroma of his “kail and his laggis.” Whether he means a high price or a low one, is not very evident from the context; but, as it shall be seen hereafter, such a disclosure would not have squared with his design. From this long since exploded clap-trap of the economist, we are favoured with the following conclusion. “When estimated by this standard, we are led to this conclusion, that the degree of

M. D. got at Edinburgh, is more valued by the public, than the same degree when obtained at other Universities." Stop, Sawney, until we examine the legitimacy of the sequence of your commercial enthymeme. Is the public a judge of the value of medical degrees? of medical education? of what passes in the lecture rooms and examination halls of Universities? No, no; if the public was sufficiently enlightened on these subjects, he would scarcely have thus ventured to appeal to such a tribunal. But in confirmation of the public opinion, we are next favoured with the intelligence, that "Students from all parts of the British Empire come to present themselves as candidates for the highest honours of medicine, although these might be obtained elsewhere at a less cost of time and expense; because they themselves value it more, and they believe it to be more esteemed by the public."

In what universities, except those which no respectable practitioner would avow, a degree can be attained at less cost of time and expense than at Edinburgh, I am not aware. It cannot be in Oxford,—in Cambridge; certainly not in Dublin; where, therefore, this Eldorado of cheap degrees is to be found, I should like to be informed. Perhaps the universities of Aberdeen and St. Andrew's are understood; though the writer might not have wished to revive old recollections, by stating the names of these virtuous sisters, whose favours, until very lately, like the advice of a quack doctor, were to be obtained by remittance and the post. To the share of triumph which Edinburgh derives from a comparison with these institutions, he is perfectly welcome. "Very often," continues this candid reasoner, "the university of Edinburgh confers the degree of M. D. on gentlemen who have already obtained A. B. from Trinity College, Dublin, and who might ultimately obtain M. B. and M. D. in their original alma mater, or, *ad eundem*, in Cambridge or Oxford." It is truly a splendid feat, a fact worthy of an ostentatious gasconade, for the University of Edinburgh to confer medical degrees on Trinity College bachelors of arts. But does not Dr. Duncan know the cause of this dubbing of Irish students with Scotch titles? It is quite impossible for one holding a situation which makes him necessarily acquainted with the laws of every British College, to be ignorant of the subject; and the concealment of the real cause of such an anomaly is worthy of the sincerity evinced throughout the whole of his sophisticated statement. He must have been perfectly aware that the ordinary time, and consequently the expense, of obtaining an M. D., are thrice as great in the University of Dublin as in Edinburgh; and that this is the reason why students are obliged to emigrate

to another college, where their objects are attainable on easier conditions. The acknowledgment, however, of this circumstance, would have exposed the folly of his comparison, as no inference of the estimation in which any two articles are held, could be fairly drawn from the demand; one of which was accessible to the purchaser, the other placed out of his reach. Were Dr. Duncan's hands tied up for a year or so, he would no doubt consider it very unfair to estimate his professional skill at the end of that period, by the number of his prescriptions. Ridiculous as such a standard would be, hear how triumphantly he claps his wings, and crows out the concluding note of his eulogium on the University of Edinburgh. "This sufficiently proves that the degree of M. D. from Edinburgh is to some persons, and in some places, more valuable than the same degree from these other universities." If Dr. Duncan be ignorant of the causes which compel Irish students to resort to Edinburgh, of the estimation in which Scotch degrees are held in Ireland, and of the description of persons who frequent his school, he shall not be long so, as I shall take the trouble of giving him the necessary information on each of these topics.

There are two classes of students, differing very widely in their professional and literary education, who leave Ireland annually to graduate in Edinburgh. The first class consists of pupils who have graduated in arts, and intend to become members of the College of Physicians, and finally, Doctors of the University of Dublin; but who, wishing to anticipate the emoluments of their profession, put their half dozen of tickets in their pockets, cross the Channel, and immediately on their return commence practice, which they could not have done for many years had they waited the tardy arrival of a degree in their native University. To this respectable class of students also belong the pupils of the Royal College of Surgeons, who, for no other reason than to qualify them to meet physicians in consultation, and to evade certain restrictions imposed on them by that body, take out the necessary tickets during their surgical studies, and having taken "letters testimonial," as surgeons at home, pass over to Edinburgh, and return with a medical degree in their pocket, and their tongue in their cheek, at the absurdity of the College of Physicians. Not one of these students cares a straw for the value of Dr. Duncan's degree, further than it authorizes some of them to anticipate the slow process of making a doctor in their own University; and the others to act in the double capacity of surgeon and physician. So far from attaching any value to such a degree, there is

not one of these pupils who does not despise it, and laugh at the folly of the arrangements which compel them to acquire such a bauble. The second, and by far the more numerous class of pupils, is made up of aspiring apothecaries, and other victims of ambitious poverty, who, unable to meet the expense of a medical education in Dublin, and Mr. Colles's impost on pathology, embark in the desperate adventure of living on salt herrings, and taking a degree at Edinburgh. These are the heroic martyrs of abstinence and study, who swell up the Irish department in the album of Dr. Duncan's University, and intend to practise in the Irish villages, where "dead men tell no tales" of their academic proficiency in science. The time is not at all long past, when a group of these studious pilgrims might be seen on an October morning, taking their leave of the mountains in the north of Ireland, and bending their way to the port of Belfast, with their staves in their hands, and their half-moon bannocks of oatmeal cake patriarehally slung in a wallet from their shoulders, to support the *vis viva* on their journey to their ancestral institutions in Scotland. Dr. Duncan has been told, that the cause of Irish students going to Edinburgh, is not a choice, but a necessity; he has been informed of the estimation in which these students hold a Scotch degree; it now only remains for him to see that the Irish public look upon such a degree at Zero. In the way of proof, it is quite enough to remark generally, that there is not a practitioner of any eminence in the capitol or the provinces, who is not a member of the College of Surgeons or Physicians in Ireland, and who does not practise under the sanction of these bodies; and, in short, that there is not a medical officer of any trust throughout the country, filled by an exclusive graduate of Edinburgh; not because there are laws to prevent their acceptance of such situations, but because an Irish grand jury would as soon commit a county infirmary to the care of one of their butlers, as to a mere Scotch diplomatist. Irishmen, therefore, go to Edinburgh, not because they respect its degree; not because they believe the public value it one straw; not because they imagine the teachers or the opportunities of learning are superior there to those at home; but because they find the time, the expense, and the qualifications less than in their native institutions, whose preposterous laws, unnecessarily prolonging the period of graduation, and multiplying expenses beyond the means of solvency, thus drive them into exile.

Under such circumstances, what should be the conduct of the physicians and surgeons in Dublin? They thus see their

countrymen compelled to expatriate themselves; to abandon a capitol overflowing with all the materials of instruction; to relinquish all these advantages to which they were born with a natural right; they see, yes, eight hundred and forty-seven of them enrolled in the album of one school in half a century, without taking into account those who graduated elsewhere during that time; and is it too much to ask now, is this emigration to continue for ever—this exclusion from national education perpetual—these absurdities periodically to furnish every scribbler with an opportunity of stigmatizing the institutions of Ireland? Should not their desire to remove these evils distance deliberation—their acts anticipate the adoption of advice? Such, at least, would be the conduct of men who felt for their reputation, and wished to give their country the benefit of a respectable and scientific body of practitioners. The evidence supplied by Dr. Duncan's statement, proves that such a body of practitioners do not exist in the country, and that the present regulations of our three great medical establishments are inadequate to accomplish so desirable an object. Each of these establishments is in fault: the principal error, however, is to be found in the statutes of the University. But is the removal of this error practicable? and of what kind and to what extent should an alteration be made?

In offering a few remarks on each of these heads, I would wish that my anonymous insignificance should be lost sight of in the importance of the subject, and that my views should be considered abstractedly from the authority of a name. I can discover no obstacle to the attainment of such a change in the statutes of Trinity College, as would remove the greater part of the evils pointed out, other than is to be found in the apathy of the profession itself. Such a change could be effected in the University, without forfeiting one acre of its princely domains; without expending one shilling of its accumulated wealth; without disturbing one of its present prerogatives; nay, such a change would even tend to increase still more its plethoric purse. The alteration, which would redound so much to its own credit, prosperity, and benefit to the country, is nothing more than the reduction of the present term of medical graduation into the more practical and useful period of four years. It would be merely to repeal a law which the improvement of the age has made obsolete, and the unsatisfied wants of the times have rendered oppressive. A law made in the reigns of Elizabeth or Charles, might be very well adapted to the exigencies of the day in which it was enacted, and become not only useless, but noxious in the progress of events. The expediency

which then prompted the enactment of this statute, now justifies its repeal; the power which legislated them still exists, and should, on the same principle, be exercised now. For us moderns not to be useful to ourselves, because our ancestors happened to make laws on certain matters, would be not only to act absurdly, but contrary to the example of those whose institutes we propose to venerate, since these legislators themselves of the olden time, must have innovated on some antecedent custom. Of the necessity and propriety of such an alteration, it would be superfluous to offer further proof: but how is such an alteration to be accomplished? I know not whether the Board of Trinity College is competent to such a measure without the intervention of the legislature; but were such a sanction required, the College might reckon with certainty on the efficient advocacy of their present and late representative. Though the approbation and concurrence of the Board should be first secured, it could not be expected that the project should originate with them. It ought, more properly, to emanate from the medical department of the establishment. Much reputation as Dr. Macartney has acquired by his professional exertions, I doubt much but it would be eclipsed by leading in this patriotic enterprise, for which his feelings and talents alike qualify him. Both he and his fellow Professors must have felt the anomaly with regret, of seeing their pupils obliged to graduate in a foreign institution. The teachers under whom pupils study, are surely the fittest persons to judge of their merits and to reward their toils. By the existing laws, this line of proceeding is entirely interrupted, the professor being deprived of the power of exercising a natural right, and the pupil of the pleasure and advantage of receiving the laurel from congenial hands. I believe I am insensibly adopting the language and sentiments of Mr. Carmichael on this subject; but I should not hesitate, even designedly, to echo the opinions of so enlightened an authority. The whole burthen, however, should not fall on the school of physic; a portion, and no small one, of the trouble, should be taken by the whole profession, both medical and surgical. Their knowledge of the defects of the present ordinances, and the respectability of their character, would ensure attention to any proposition which they might submit to the consideration of the Board of Trinity College or the legislature. There is no clashing of interests, that I know of, to prevent the co-operation of both professions in this national undertaking. "*Vis unita fortior*," the more engaged in it, the more certain the success. Let but a few of the influential members of both parties for a committee,

hold a "consultation" on the subject, and they will soon find the smothered embers of national emotion revive around them in an irresistible flame. It is but too often the custom with many, to judge of the merits of a proposition by the chances of its adoption and success, to stigmatize every proposal as impracticable, even before an attempt has been made to carry it into execution. To such over-wise mortals, who mistake their own phlegm for the inspirations of prudence, and cautiously suspend their approbation until theory consolidates into events, I can only reply in the language of the poet:

————— Si quid novisti, rectius istis  
Candidus imperti, si non his utere mecum.

ERINENSIS.

## SKETCHES

OF THE

## MEDICAL PROFESSION IN IRELAND.

*Reduction of the present Term of Medical Graduation in the University of Dublin.*

(Continued.)

The conclusion of a former Sketch had merely disclosed the proper object of that paper. So much space had been occupied in laying the Scotch Entellus on his back, that little room remained for enforcing the proposition naturally arising out of his statements, for pointing out its beneficial consequences, and the most judicious means of carrying it into execution. Imperfect, however, as the exposition of that measure must have been under such circumstances, its obvious expediency secured it a favourable reception, and the public opinion is not wrested to any egotistical purposes, when it is stated that the proposal has met with the unqualified approbation of every medical man in Ireland. Encouraged by this general concordance of opinion, as well as by that desire of making Dublin a regular school of the medical sciences, which is every day becoming more manifest and powerful, I shall endeavour to place the subject in a variety of lights in the subsequent pages. I am the more willing to undertake the task, as there exists on the question a great confusion of ideas amongst that portion of the profession who are necessarily interested in the success of the project, and by whose exertions it must be ultimately accomplished. They feel a strong impulse to attain their object, but it resembles more the dark and instinctive might of a cyclops groping in his cave, than the rational and concerted energies of men prepared for difficulties, but determined to

overcome them. An important, but undefined speculation, arising out of the favourable circumstances by which they are surrounded, floats before their imagination, but as yet they seem satisfied with the contemplation of a phantom. Though strongly impressed with the advantages of a realization of their wishes, yet of the obstacles which oppose such a consummation, and of the manner of removing them, they are far from entertaining any definite ideas, or any fixed plan of operation. The total absence of unity of design, and concentration of exertion, which they evince even on this favourite project, would almost justify the observation so often repeated, that however excellent the affections of the Irish heart may be, the Irish head, in matters of mere business, is sadly deficient. I would fain, rather than hope, to rectify its errors on the present occasion; but convinced of being myself "a chip of the same block," I shall submit my opinions with a humble apprehension of their fallibility. Keeping, therefore, the several points just glanced at in view, I shall attempt to establish certain principles which might serve to guide the great bodies at present in motion, but without at all aspiring to a solar supremacy, or pretending to circumscribe the orbits in which our three medical constellations of Dublin should move in a new system. Were I disposed to secure, by a rhetorical artifice, attention to these remarks, I might commence by showing, in vivid colouring, how much it behoves Dublin to be on the alert at the present moment, in consequence of the crisis obviously in progress just now in the medical affairs of these countries. But there is no necessity for embellishing facts, which, of themselves, are quite sufficient to ensure consideration. Not only is a revolution taking place in the policies of the profession, but the science itself, and the mode of cultivating it, have been affected by the change. Of those phases in the medical horizon some are favourable, others, at least of doubtful portent to the interests of the school of Dublin, to be prepared for the contingencies of good and evil, and to conform to the improvements of the hour, is what prudence dictates.

It is pretty evident that the University of Edinburgh, through her organ, Dr. Duncan, affects to conceal the fact, shakes on her throne of rocks, and no wonder, when the erasure of a single line from the statute-book of Trinity College would empty her benches of one-third of her students. In the blundering defence of the institutes of that establishment by this gentleman, it may readily be observed, that his fears confess what his partiality and self-interest would willingly conceal. Hints are there ingeniously thrown out, that the examina-

tions are now conducted with more severity; that the pupils are now more instructed than formerly; that the system of education is improved, and the period prolonged; and many other admissions made, equally illusive as to the future intentions of that institution, and significant of its past transgressions. It is certainly not a little amusing to witness the old sinner, after having overstocked the world with her graduated abortions, apologising for her profligate fecundity, and at length girding her loins with the penitential tincture of continence. But there is little trust to be reposed in the sincerity of her conversion, it being apparent, from the statements of her confessor, Dr. Duncan, that under the mask of an extorted reform, she means to persevere in her old commerce of tickets and diplomas, and is "even in penance planning sins anew." A reputation, which was acquired and is maintained by the defects of other schools, must vanish with the removal of these causes; it is therefore in the power of Dublin to profit at any moment by taking away the feeble support on which the fame of a rival chiefly depends. On the other hand, the University of London is rising in the distance. What influence it may exercise over the profession, it would be presumptuous to assume, but it may be expected to be of a very beneficial kind. The men engaged in its management are unfettered by any previous ordinances; they have the selection of the first teachers of medicine and surgery in the world; they have no interests to consult separate from those of the students; so that it may rationally be supposed, that they will take due advantage of such favourable circumstances. It is true they have not the power of conferring degrees, but this permission must soon be a consequence of the probable celebrity of that school. In the event of such a privilege being obtained, it may certainly injure the school of Edinburgh; but if Dublin be only true to itself, it must ever possess, at least for natives of Ireland, attractions superior to those of any other institution. It should not, however, remain an inattentive spectator of these prospects under an impression of inviolable security, but by adapting its institutes to the circumstances of the times, disarm Edinburgh of her present power of rivalry, and prevent the possibility of London becoming a future opponent.

The principles by which Dublin should be guided in this emergency, are few and obvious; but for the purpose of illustration, I shall suppose that all our medical ordinances were annulled, that all our physicians and surgeons were assembled together, untrammelled by prejudice, and unbiassed by self-interest, and that the sole

object of their deliberation was the conversion of Dublin into a great school of medicine; would any individual, I ask, have the hardihood to rise in such an assembly, and with the experience of the past before his eyes, propose the re-enactment of all the old statutes? Would the school of physic send its pupils to graduate at Edinburgh—would the school of surgery drive its students there, and to London, for licenses—and the College of Physicians conspire with both for the restoration of such impolitic measures? Impossible. I can scarcely conceive, that amongst these three bodies, one man could be found who would risk the odium of such a proposition, or if any one could be so lost to common sense as to make such a proposal, that it would not be rejected by general acclamation. There can, therefore, be no grounds for supposing, that the whole profession in Ireland do not look upon foreign education as an evil, and on the causes which produce it with disapprobation. Those causes can, I conceive, be resolved into a single phrase,—the disproportion between the pecuniary means of the student, and the expensiveness of the perverse laws with which he has to comply. It is quite notorious that the medical pupils of every country are from the middle ranks of life, with rarely more property than what is sufficient to complete their education in the cheapest manner they can. Nay, in nine cases out of ten, the means for the attainment of their object, even in the most economical mode which they can adopt, is either deficient, or obtained with great difficulty. After a long intimacy with students, I can say, from personal observation, that not one in fifty of them can command one hundred a year during the period of their studies, and that after they have attained a license or a degree, they are oftener supported by the bounty of their friends, than by any inherited property, or the proceeds of their own industry. It is certain, at least, that the majority of medical pupils are men of slender means; and it is equally certain, that in all laws respecting them, that two things should be kept in view—first, to legislate for the multitude, and, second, to accommodate the scale of expense to the means of the many, not of the few.

Every legislator, from Moses to Bentham, has formed his institutes for the government of the multitude; and even the Satrap of a Persian province was instructed to equalize the tax to the solvency of the slave. It would be absurd to suppose, that any pupil not residing, or intending to practise within the circular road, would ever think of becoming a doctor of the University at the rate of time and expense, which that title at present costs. Even though he had the means of acquiring such a degree, the

seventh, and, by far the most valuable, portion of human life, is too much to sacrifice for the possession of a title which may turn out after all but a precarious support for the remaining six. Hence the regulations which require such an expenditure of time and means have never even partially been complied with, having, like the sanguinary laws of Draco, defeated their own object by their severity. On the other hand, the license of the College of Physicians, though highly respectable in its own immediate sphere, is not a substitute for a medical degree. It was never intended, in fact, that the College of Physicians should confer degrees. The spirit of their incorporation was of an entirely different character. The body was chartered more for the purpose of superintending the practice, than the tuition of the medical science of suppressing empiricism, and of acting, in some measure, in the capacity of a health-police in the capital. Hence the diploma of that body is almost exclusively confined to the city, where it confers some local immunities and advantages. But whatever might have been the object of the incorporation of that body, and however respectable its license may be, it is certain it is no substitute for a university degree, because it is not acknowledged as such by the army and navy boards, and other dispensers of places, whom students must please in their academical qualifications. Many of the preceding objections apply with equal force to the College of Surgeons. It is too exclusive in its constitution, and too expensive in its charges, for an establishment of general and national education. I allude in particular to apprentice fees, and hospital charges, which are, in some measure, referrible to the College. If either of these ordinances secured the object intended, there would, of course, be less reason to doubt of their expediency, but the contrary is well known to be the fact. By the imposition of apprentice fees, it has been sought to produce two effects: first, to raise the respectability of Irish surgeons, and, secondly, to enrich them, by subsequently receiving fees from apprentices in turn. A third object might be added, the better instruction of the pupil, by being under the care of a master; but I appeal to the whole profession in Ireland, whether any one of these effects have followed the adoption of apprenticeships? It is quite impossible that any such salutary effects should be derived from the operation of an institute which violates the first principles of economy and of justice. It could not, for instance, be intended for the benefit of the profession generally, for the majority of them never could hope to have apprentices; it could not secure the respectability of the pupils, for it is easily

and is daily evaded; and even though such a law was rigorously observed, it is more than doubtful whether any body of men have a right of imposing so heavy an expense on the education of their members. For the truth of these opinions, I refer to the actual condition of the profession. There are numbers of practitioners, both in the capital and the country, who never had, and never will have an apprentice. It is equally true, that many of the pupils through the liberality of friends and relations, evade the expenses of indenture; and that while the son of a man-milliner in Grafton-street obtains a medical education comparatively for nothing, the son of a respectable grazier or farmer in the country has to pay some thousand pounds for similar advantages. The fees paid for admission into hospitals constitute, if possible, a still more ruinous exaction to the interests of Dublin as a school of surgery. It would be worse than superfluous to enter into a detailed account of the consequences of such restrictions to the study of pathology, particularly for the information of gentlemen who can refer to their cash books on this subject. By turning over the pages of these registers of iniquitous lucre, they will find that the name of the same individual rarely occurs there more than once, or for one year. Nay, numbers go every year from Dublin to Edinburgh to obtain Dr. Duncan's beautiful diploma, who have never spent an hour in an hospital, and what these famished pathologists can learn in the Royal Infirmary, (if the accounts which reach us here be true,) in six months may be easily calculated. Not only is this odious tax imposed on the student, but it is extended even to the licentiates of the College, having conversed with one of them the other day in Stevens's Hospital on the subject. But waving all consideration of the injurious influence of this particular law on the native student, does any man in his senses think that any stranger would ever come to Dublin, and comply with such exorbitant demands? What makes this custom still more contemptible and odious is, that not one of the persons who profit by it pretend even to justify their conduct. I have spoken with many of them on the subject, and not one of them offered the slightest justification of such a practice. The consideration of paying for hospital attendance, suggests the propriety of noticing the value which the purchaser receives in exchange; and as I mentioned a change having taken place in the manner of teaching the science, to which Dublin should not be inattentive, I shall introduce that subject here, as a more fitting opportunity may not occur. Of course I allude to clinical instruction. To be convinced of the high importance of this



subject, I have only to refer the hospital practitioners of Dublin to the current medical literature of the day, in which it will be found, that the excellence of every medical establishment is rated, and justly, in proportion to the attention paid to clinical medicine, and that the most valuable discoveries of the day are almost invariably associated with its cultivation. The many excellent reports which reach us from the French, German, and Italian hospitals, are all, for the most part, compiled out of the labours of the ward, and attributable to the merited estimation in which this method of publication and instruction is held. It is not at all improbable but it may ultimately supersede the old plan of giving long and elaborate courses of lectures on the practice of physic and surgery, and that information will be communicated on these subjects at the bed-side of the patient, and enforced by the inspection of disease alone. I am well aware that there is an erroneous impression on the minds of the hospital practitioners in Dublin, of the inconvenience and difficulty of delivering clinical instructions. They look on it as a laborious and unprofitable office; and no doubt the manner which they adopt of performing it, makes the duty to correspond with their preconceptions of its arduousness. In all the instances which happened to come under my observation in Dublin, the lecturers seemed to have taken up some particular points of surgery, composed regular treatises on them, but in their delivery seldom alluded to a single case in the house at the time. Now that is certainly to take a great deal of unnecessary labour, but certainly not to deliver clinical lectures. So far from sitting down to write essays of that kind, or wasting his time in a lecture room, he can perform all the duties of a clinical preceptor without ever putting a pen to paper, or ascending a rostrum. He has, in fact, but to *think audibly* while discharging his duties to the sick in going through the wards, and the business is well done. Post-mortem examinations, and reporting the practice of the hospital, would occupy no time, as these could be done by the appointment of competent clerks in the several establishments, and selected from the most diligent and qualified of the pupils. As to converting clinical medicine into a means of extorting a few pounds from the pockets of his pupils, no respectable practitioner would think of it. The subject, however, is one to which much attention should be paid; and \* \* \*

ERINENSIS.

Dublin, July 5, 1827.

[To be concluded in our next.]

SKETCHES  
OF THE  
MEDICAL PROFESSION IN IRELAND:

(Concluded from page 496.)

I HAD been saying, when my paper abruptly terminated, that more attention should be paid to clinical medicine in Dublin, from a conviction that it was much neglected there; and was about to observe that, having shown the errors of many of our ordinances, I should next proceed to consider the objections which might be made to the application of the principles pointed out for the correction of our impolitic institutes. In demonstrating the evils of our present regulations, nothing was stated but what is of common notoriety; and, in the formation of maxims for their removal, the grounds of policy were made perhaps sufficiently intelligible to the meanest understanding. In the performance of both duties, all ideas of raising one profession above the other, and of aggrandizing individuals in either, were entirely laid aside: the common good of all, the benefit of society, and the conversion of Dublin into a national school, were alone consulted. These three objects, I conceive, are inseparably connected, and can no more be attained independently of each other, than matter can be disjoined from the universal laws to which it is subject. But plain as those positions must appear, and obvious as are the means which have been suggested for their accomplishment, I should ill discharge the office of monitor, if I omitted to explain away such obstacles as might present themselves to the adoption of advice. In doing so, I shall conceal nothing which seems to me to deserve notice; and first it might be asked, Would a degree of arts be dispensed with in the event of abbreviating the present term of medical graduation in our University? Certainly. If the student has money and time, let him take this degree; if he has money, but no time, let him take it while pursuing his medical studies; but if he can command neither, then let it be ascertained previously, whether he possesses a sufficient knowledge of classical literature, by examination. If the taking of this degree were thus left optional with pupils, just as many would do so then as now; if it were permitted to acquire it at the same time with that of medicine, many more, I am convinced, would avail them-

selves of the immunity than at present; but whether or not, an examination would be quite sufficient for all useful purposes. I do not presume to deliver these opinions, without being prepared to answer for their correctness. In the first place, most of the class-books, read in the University, being taught in almost every grammar school in Ireland, I see no reason why the student should not learn them there as well as in college; secondly, having done so, I can discover no just grounds for compelling him to retrace his steps at an increase of expense; and, thirdly, why he should not, if he so chooses, be able to put in his literary terms while attending his medical studies. I am, at this moment, personally acquainted with many pupils who are attending their terms, taking tickets from the school of physic for the Edinburgh degree, and preparing for examination before the Court of the College of Surgeons, confessedly the most severe professional tribunal in the British dominions; and I am quite convinced that these students are equal to such multifarious duties. Much trifling discussion has been lately expended on this subject. Thus, in the dispute between Drs. Thomson and Duncan of Edinburgh, the latter complains that the former has not fixed the *maximum* of classical knowledge which a medical student ought to possess; but the other might with equal justice complain, that Dr. Duncan has not defined the *minimum* required by the University of Edinburgh. On the subject, indeed, of examining in classics before the commencement of professional business, he certainly makes a very curious confession; for he states that, if this practice were adopted, few pupils would incur the expenses of travelling from England or Ireland, on the chance of being rejected at the end of their journey; but this considerate casuist in mail-coach fare, and the sale of tickets, can have no scruples, provided he observes his oath in the discharge of his duties as an examiner, to reject a pupil, not only after travelling from England or Ireland, or the banks of the Ganges, but after this same Dr. Duncan has pocketed the traveller's cash for two or three years, because he did not recollect his syntax. Ah! Sawney, Sawney!—but, the fact is, there can be no rule laid down in this matter. All that should be expected from any pupil is, that he would be able to translate with facility all Greek and Latin works, from which he can derive a knowledge either of the principles, or the history of his profession, and this modicum of classical learning can be acquired at every grammar school, and its possession positively ascertained by examination. With respect to the still more important questions of the term of graduation, and the privileges of the

graduates, I think four years would be sufficient for the one, and the others should not, in the least, infringe on any rights possessed by those who have been educated under the present system. It is quite notorious that most pupils, after idling two or three seasons, prepare in one year for their examination; and the advantage of converting Trinity College into a practical medical school, should supersede all notions of contending for an equality of rights. If pupils can thus prepare for examination in one or two years, *a fortiori*, they could do so in four; and the importance of the other object would make it cheaply secured by a concession of superior rights. A similar feeling, and for still stronger reasons, should exclude all interference with the privileges of the College of Physicians. The majority of the new graduates being destined for the army, the navy, and the country, it is obvious they could never interfere with this body in any respect.

In noticing the period for medical graduation, it was omitted to state an objection which might be made on the supposition, that the time being shorter for that purpose in the University, its school would consequently be preferred to that of the College of Surgeons by most pupils. If this could happen, it might be easily remedied by the latter establishment; but, in all probability if both diplomas were alike accessible, they would both be taken by the same individuals, and studied for equally in both institutions. These, I conceive, are the only, or, at least, the principal objections, which might be opposed to the proposed change in the cases of the University and the College of Physicians. In the instances of the College of Surgeons and the Hospitals, the grounds of opposition are still less feasible, and have been, in some measure, replied to in treating of these establishments in the former part of this paper. It was then attempted to be shown, that the retention of apprenticeships must ever prove an invincible obstacle to the full development of the energies of the College; and that the grounds on which it is pretended to justify this pernicious custom, are false in principle, and impotent in effect. It is as unwarranted by expediency, as it is unsupported by precedent. Neither in France, Germany, Italy, England, nor in Scotland, are apprenticeships required. Why then should a plan of tuition, deemed unnecessary in every other part of the world, be confined to Ireland alone; or why should the Irish student, who perhaps has, of all others, the smallest means, be compelled to pay most for his professional education? It is only surprising with what a degree of ignorant obstinacy the junior members of this body cling to a custom which, considered even in a selfish

light, never does, nor ever can serve them. But, say these monopolists by expectation, we have paid an indenture fee, therefore, others must pass under the yoke also: we may become hospital surgeons, professors, proprietors of schools, and should not on this account abolish a system which may profit us in these capacities. Ungenerous assumption! Illusive hope! to inflict those penalties on others, merely because they have been imposed on ourselves—to mix up a personal consideration with a public duty—to sacrifice the interests of the school of Dublin, and make a hope which may never be realized, the pretext of the immolation. But it might be said, that the total abolition of apprenticeships would have a tendency to overstock the surgical profession in Ireland; and that the reduction of fees in hospitals would lessen the income of the officers, and crowd these establishments to an inconvenient degree with pupils. If the first of these allegations was founded on fact, it would be deserving of refutation; but it is quite notorious that apprenticeships do not in the least limit the number of practitioners in surgery in this country, in consequence of the facility of obtaining licenses in other countries. As it is, therefore, impossible to check this influx of practitioners by any law, as the evil has no remedy but the poverty which itself inflicts, would it not be better that the superabundant practitioners should be well educated at home, than imperfectly abroad? But there is no complaint more silly than that of a surplus of practitioners, or any labour more hopeless than that which would fain set bounds to their multiplication, which being regulated by the demand, there must always be an excess of the supply. The complaint is, in fact, as old as society, and as universal as the occupations of men. It cost Socrates a great deal of unavailing labour to limit the number of philosophers, or sophists rather, at Athens; and Juvenal railed to no purpose at the number of scribblers at Rome. Talk to the merchant on the subject—there are too many speculators; converse with a lawyer—his eloquence gushes out in a pathetic lamentation on the superfluity of pleaders, and the scarcity of briefs; ask the opinion of the young divine—the multitude of our sins is instantly forgotten, and he positively declares there are too many labourers in the vineyard; nay, bend over the stall, and ten chances to one but the wretched inmate sighs out an explanation of his poverty, by pointing to the ubiquity of bulks. But it is idle to indulge in such complaints; as long as men are born with feet, there will be a superabundance of cobblers; and until they become immortal, or die without disease, I verily believe there will be a surplus of doctors calculating on their pains.

The objections of crowding the hospital, and lessening the incomes of the officers, are still more nugatory. In all probability a reduction of fees would increase these emoluments, as the lowering of a particular tax sometimes increases the revenue, by encouraging consumption. There are many who will pay a small sum annually, who will not pay at all from the exorbitance of the demand; so that while in the end nearly the same amount would be received by the hospital surgeons, the opportunities of instruction would be fourfold increased. If a scale of prices were fixed according to the number of beds in each hospital, reports of the cases regularly read, and a few clinical observations daily delivered, the number of the hospitals in Dublin along with these precautions, must entirely prevent any inconvenient accumulation of pupils in these establishments. Having on a former occasion explained away the objection to the general adoption of clinical instruction, on the supposed difficulties of its cultivation, it is unnecessary to dwell more on that subject at present, than to state generally that the attainments of the pupil and the celebrity of the professor, and by consequence the reputation of Dublin as a school of medicine and surgery, are alike involved in the cultivation of this science. There is, in fact, no difficulty in the execution. Every practitioner must propose to himself some object in the administration of a drug; forms some idea of the nature of the disease in which he gives it; is aware of the manner in which he performs an operation, and the motives which induce him to undertake it; and he must certainly be a great niggard of the tongue, or very incapable of using it, if he cannot inform the persons around him of what passes in his mind during the discharge of his duties. If he only does this, it is all that can be expected of him, and by doing so he communicates a great deal of useful information. With these observations I should close the catalogue of objections if I had been less acquainted with human nature, and the spirit of mutual jealousy which exists between the two Colleges—a feeling unworthy of both parties as men of science, and impolitic as national bodies. The breach, however, between them cannot be widened by the adoption of the views pointed out in the preceding pages, and should not prevent their co-operation.

The College of Physicians must, ere this time, be convinced of the inefficacy of all devices to deprive surgeons of medical degrees, which can be readily obtained by crossing the channel. The conferring of medical degrees by Trinity College can in no way affect their interests. By their union, therefore, in this design, they may give to it the appearance of a boon, and

seem to bestow that which they cannot withhold by force; but all such individual feelings should be merged in the more important consideration of making Dublin a national school of medicine and surgery. It is now well known, that the knowledge of both professions is as necessary to practise either with success, as the credentials of both are necessary to the attainment of most situations. This single circumstance should be a sufficient inducement to the Professors of Dublin to place both sciences, as well as the testimonials of their profession, within the reach of every pupil, whose interests, even beyond the class room, should not be overlooked by his teachers.

Did any other objections than those which have been stated occur to me, I should have willingly discussed them, well aware, that even a slight obstacle often outweighs in the scale of deliberation a strong incentive to action, men in general acting on the principle, that "prudence is the better half of valour." But there is, I conceive, in the present instance, no necessity for the observance of this cowardly maxim. The difficulties to be overcome, if such they can be truly called, are insignificant; the objects sought for are worthy even of toilsome attainment; the principles to be observed in their pursuit are few, obvious, and unerring. The laws to be repealed are powerful only because they are not resisted; their strength lies not so much in the excellence of their constitution as in the apathy which slumbers beneath their oppression; they are but mere cobwebs—gossamer—which the breath of a united profession could at once rend asunder. The desire for the accomplishment of the proposed design is the best and strongest proof of its utility. The advantages resulting from its completion are not confined to a particular time, country, or persons; they would extend to generations yet unborn, and embrace the whole human race within the sphere of their operation. The views suggested for securing these objects being based on the immutable laws which govern human action, cannot fail of their end if only put into execution. When I say they consist in legislating for the many and not for the few, and in equalising the expense of education to the means of the educated, I confess myself incapable of placing the self-evidence of their justice and expediency in clearer light by any artifice of illustration. In reducing these principles into practice, however, care should be taken that the facility of acquiring degrees would not be independent of qualification, for I would not level, but elevate. While the expenses were lowered, and opportunities of learning thrown open, the examinations should be even more se-

vere. I would not have Dublin's diploma shop; did I conceive that this should happen, I would be the first to oppose any innovation on our present institutes, deeming it more creditable to any medical establishment to give one well-educated practitioner to society in a year, than a hundred empirics in the same time. The attainments, not the number of its graduates, should form the basis of its fame; and the possession of knowledge, instead of pounds, shillings, and pence, be assumed as the best and most honourable check on the multiplication of practitioners. There should be no divan of hungry professors compounding calumnies of other establishments in their closets, stretching out their webs of sophistry to draw the vulgar within their reach, and feeding on them, like so many spiders in their dens. If Dublin can be raised into a school of medicine only by such vile arts as these; if it can maintain a superiority only by the defects of contemporary institutions; if it can support its ascendancy only by pandering to the ignorance of the medical rabble; then let its halls remain in their present comparatively deserted but honourable solitude. Of the means by which these halls might be thronged, I have nothing more to say than that it must be left to the prudence of the united professions of medicine and surgery to adopt whatever course they conceive most expedient for that purpose; but though readily done, it must be by some exertion. Laws will not repeal themselves, or the statute-book purge itself of its noxious institutes; the knot can be loosed only by retracing the process by which it was tied. Let but that ambitious vigilance which has watched the interests and laboured to raise the character of the licentiates of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, be exerted in a wider sphere, and it must eventually confer those advantages on all which it has so successfully secured to a few. To the College of Surgeons I would propose a portion of its conduct as an example for imitation. By two wise ordinances, the separation of the scalpel from the pestle, and severity of examination, it has elevated its members to a rank in society not enjoyed by the aggregate of the surgical profession in any other country; and in the short space of twenty years has founded establishments in science and stone, far beyond what could have been expected to shoot up in a century in the atmosphere of a degraded province. Let them but perfect what they have so well commenced; render their code of laws as conspicuous for its equity as their new temple is now admired for beauty of proportion and magnificence of design; rise from fiction to reality, and make those allegorical statues of Wisdom and Health the true emblems of the moral spirit

of the structure, whose roof at present they only ornament.

The feats performed by the College of Surgeons should not be lost on the Physicians. If they do not advance, the rapid strides of their rivals must make them appear to retrograde in the eyes of the public. In rearing up to perfection a school of physic in Ireland, they are still more interested than their contemporary labourers. The consciousness of so many excellent opportunities for this purpose having so long remained comparatively undeveloped in their hands, should now only stimulate them the more to exertion; like the soldiers of antiquity, who happened to lose their shields in the fight, they should seek the first favourable moment for re-establishing themselves in the estimation of their country. Of both professions it would be worthy to unite in trimming the lamp of national science, pale in the lurid glare of the torch of political discord; and as Hippocrates, the father of their art, converted the miseries of Athens, while the victim of faction and pestilence, into the materials of philosophy and of his own immortality, like him raise a moral fabric out of the misfortunes of their country, which may be enjoyed with gratitude by their posterity.

For the earnestness which I have manifested in this address, my conviction of the salutary effects which would flow from its adoption is my only apology; and if aught I have said on this, or any former occasion, should prevent the bodies whom I address from seconding my views, I have now only room to explain my motives, by assuring them, in the language of penitence and of Greece,\*—“That I would dwell longer on this subject were there not a danger that, from the frequency of my invectives, I appeared to take a pleasure in finding fault with you; and did I speak before any but yourselves, there might be some ground for this calumny. But I traduce you not before your enemies, with a view to render you odious or contemptible; I blame you in your own presence, to render you more moderate, more wise, and more happy. Consider then, that though the language of admonition and reproach be sometimes unavoidably the same, yet the meaning is always different: and that the man who rails at you through hatred, does not more deserve your resentment than he, who admonishes you through affection, deserves your gratitude and esteem. Let each, therefore, be received with those sentiments which his intentions ought to excite; but especially attend to the man who describes your mis-

fortunes and your errors, for it is only by learning to reform the one, that you can be enabled to avoid the other.” This is my defence for the severity of any thing I have said, or may still say in future, on this subject.

ERINENSIS.

\* Isocrates on “The Peace,” &c.